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CANADA

The Debates of the Senate

OFFICIAL REPORT.

SPEECH

OF

HON. N. A. BELCOURT

SENATOR

ON

The Military Service Bill

In the Senate of Canada, Ottawa, Friday, August 3, 1917.

On motion of the Hon. Sir James Lougheed, that Bill 75, an Act respecting Military Service, be now read a second time, and the motion of Hon. Mr. Bostock in amendment thereto:

That the following words be added after the word "time":

"With the understanding that this Bill will not come into force until after the general election."

Hon. N. A. BELCOURT: Honourable gentlemen, a year ago almost to the day, fifty or sixty delegates of the Empire Parliamentary Association, coming from the House of Lords, the British House of Commons and the Parliaments of all the self-governing British dominions, including, among others, three of our colleagues in this House, the honourable senator from Stadacona (Hon. Mr. Landry), the honourable the junior member for Halifax (Hon. Mr. Dennis), the honourable gentleman from Moose Jaw (Hon. Mr. Ross), and myself, were officially received by the President of the Republic of France, at the Elysée Palace. I had on that occasion the honour of being selected to reply to M. Poincaré and to acknowledge on behalf of the delegates the eloquent and kindly words which he had addressed to us. Among other things I said this: "The countries from which we come are pacifist countries, and most of us, in fact all of us, are pacifists; but on the day when the German hordes brutally set foot, almost simultaneously, on the soil of Belgium and France, there was a cry of supreme indignation throughout the British Empire; there was one firm and irrevocable resolve—that Great Britain and the Dominions under her sovereignty owed it to themselves, to Belgium, and to France, to the cause of justice, honour, freedom and democracy, to take the largest possible part in repelling the colossal attack so elaborately and so long prepared by Germany." If I now recall the statement which I made on that solemn occasion, it is in order that there may be no misapprehension on the part of the honourable gentlemen who are now listening to me, or of those who may read my words, as to where I have stood and now stand regarding Canada's participation in this war. I said at the Elysée Palace simply what I had said on many previous occasions, and what I have since frequenly repeated, in many parts of Ontario and Quebec. The first time that I had the oppor-

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tunity to declare my attitude with regard to Canada's participation in the war was at Sohmer Park, in the month of September, 1914. I recall the occasion because I think it adds another to the many proofs which have been given by honourable gentlemen on this side who have preceded me, that the Government have been most slack and most derelict in not taking advantage of the unquestioned enthusiasm which was manifested in the province of Quebec at the opening of the war. At the meeting at Sohmer Park there were 15,000 French Canadians. They were addressed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, my friend the late lamented Thomas Chase Casgrain, the Honourable Rodolphe Lemieux, Mr. Maréchal (now Mr. Justice Maréchal), our colleague the honourable gentleman from De Lorimier (Hon. Mr. Dandurand), Colonel Gaudet, myself, and others; and at no other recruiting meeting I have attended has an appeal been as well received as the appeal, so plain and so definite, made on that occasion by all these French orators—for not a single word of English was spoken.

How is it that the Government has taken as little advantage of that magnificent enthusiasm, demonstrated in the large city of Montreal so early in the war? As the hour is late and I know honourable gentlemen are anxious to vote, I am not going to take as much time as I had intended in giving the facts and arguments to show why the province of Quebec has not done perhaps as much as was expected of her, as much as she would have done if she had received one-tenth of the encouragement she should have received, if her manifest determination to take her full share in this war had been duly recognized and properly encouraged and assisted; if she had been differently treated by the Federal Government and the government as well as the press of some of the English-speaking provinces. I shall mention only a few points, because I do not wish to take up time unnecessarily.

If you will look over the names of members of commissions, committees and various bodies and persons appointed by this Government to take some share or other in the conduct of this war you will find that out of the hundreds of gentlemen who have been asked to serve on these bodies there are but very few Liberals, and fewer French Canadians. May I be allowed to mention one of the most recent instance? The Advisory Council which was appointed yesterday, I think, or the day before, in connection with the control of food. In a list of over fifty names of persons appointed on that council, how many Liberals do you suppose there are? I could count only two. How many French Canadians? One. I mention these facts merely to show that in all these instances the Government of Canada from the outset decided that the conduct of the war should be monopolized by it and that Liberals were not to be allowed to take any share or responsibility therein. What is the reason? I can imagine no other reason than that at first, and for many months after the war began, it seemed to the Government of the day that there would not be enough glory to go around; it was expected that the war would not last very long, and they wanted to monopolize all the patronage and all the glory. I can find no other explanation; I have heard of no other; but there is one fact that is certain, and that is, that at no time have the Liberals of this country received anything like the recognition which they should have received. If they had received that recognition, conscription would have been absolutely unnecessary.

May I mention my own case in connection with two matters with regard to the war? I was one of the very first who took upon himself to write to His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, the very day after the establishment of the Patriotic Fund, sending my subscription, which I believe was the first to go in. It was not large, as my means are limited, but it was as generous as I could possibly make it. No recognition was made of it in any way, and no position on the committee was assigned to me; I heard no more about it, except, of course, the letter of acknowledgment from His Royal Highness. I thought nothing of it, but later on a local committee of the Fund was formed, and a large number of my good Tory friends were put on that committee, all the offices being assigned to Conservatives of Ottawa; and in this city, where one-third of the population are French Canadians, not a single French Canadian was put on that committee. Would you believe that I had to apply three times, first personally, and finally in writing, requesting that my name be added to the committee, because I was anxious to serve; and when I was put on I was the first and only French Canadian. True, after that a few other French Canadians were put on. We are told: "Why, you French Canadians don't do anything; you don't subscribe to the Patriotic Fund, you don't take part in Red Cross work, you won't serve, you won't do your bit." As regards recruiting, what occurred in my own case was this: In September, shortly after my return from Europe with our colleagues whom I have mentioned.

I offered my services to Colonel Mignault, who had been asked to form a general French Canadian recruiting committee throughout Canada. I said to him: "We French Canadians in Ottawa and vicinity are ready to continue to do our best." I might mention here that there is no district in Canada where the people of any nationality have enlisted in such large numbers in proportion to the population, and have gone over and fought, as the French Canadians in the district of Ottawa. I do not care what the Government returns show; I know that myself, because I know the people. Colonel Mignault told me that he was very glad of my offer, and asked me if I would take charge of things in Ottawa and do something, and I said I would—that I would get our friends on this local committee and see what we could do. The committee was formed, and I was appointed chairman. There were Conservatives and Liberals on it, all French Canadians, and we begged and begged the Department of Militia to give us the necessary recognition and the forms to use and send out. We subscribed a considerable sum of money, but never could we get the slightest kind of satisfaction from the Department of Militia. Yet we are told that the French Canadians won't enlist, that they are slackers and poltroons and cowards. I could give many more similar instances, but the time is too short.

My position in regard to this war has been clear, definite, and unhesitating from the very start. To my conception, and it was a very early conception, the struggle is one of democracy against autocracy in Europe, and against militarism all over the world. Whatever may have been the origin, the cause or the object of the war, it appeared very clear to me from the outset that, if Germany did win in this war it would mean the absolute rule of militarism over the world; and I at once realized that of all the countries in the world a young and growing democracy such as Canada would be hampered, would be strangled, and would suffer more than possibly any other nation in the world, with the establishment of militarism. How could Canada live by practising militarism? The only way in which Canada can develop and progress, the only way by which we Canadians of both races can make this country prosperous, is by having nothing whatever to do with militarism. Pacifist as I am, and have been all my life, and intend to be, and not ashamed to proclaim it, I am in this war to the end, and I believe Canada should do everything it can towards participating therein just because I am a pacifist, and because to me this war is war against war, war against armament, war for peace. No country on the face of the earth is more interested than ours in having the reign of peace established, and to no country is there more danger from having anything to do with militarism. The stake involved in this titanic contest transcends the British Empire, transcends France, and all the Allies. There can be no doubt that the issue is whether this world hereafter is to be ruled by brute force. Our participation in the war does not depend on any constitutional provision, whether of Great Britain or Canada, nor upon tradition, or precedent. Indeed, I go further and say that if all those things stood against Canadian participation, it would still be demanded and justified. To me it is not that we are in this war so much because Great Britain is in it, with all her strength and determination, or because France is in it, with all her soul and incomparable valour and genius, as because of the issue involved, as I have just described it. It is not so much the Union Jack or the Tricolor, or even both, that are our inspiration and our guide, as the ideal for which they stand with the flags of Belgium and the other Allies. The "sacred union," as it has been properly called, may and probably will not last forever, but the cause for the triumph of which it labours is one in which all the world, Canada included, has a supreme and permanent interest. If Germany should win, militarism would become and rem in the absolute master of the world. There is no considerable difference of opinion between Ontario and Quebec, or in this country generally in that regard. My French Canadian friends of the province of Quebec, like those of Ontario, have the same conception of this war as you and I have. They are willing to do their share; they have been willing all along, and would have done it; only, in the light of what you have heard from honourable gentlemen on this side, it cannot be denied that they have not been given the opportunity, or allowed or encouraged or assisted to serve the country in the way in which they should have been.

I admit that there are some in the province of Quebec, as in other provinces, who

think that Canada has now done all that it should have done. Some think Canada has done all it could or can do—and on that score there is a good deal to be said. I am not called upon, and it is not necessary for me, in the view I take of this Bill, to discuss whether Canada has done all it can do, or whether it should and can go on and do anything further. I take the view that the way in which the Government proposes that any future possible contribution of Canada should be made is not the proper or best way.

I admit that if we could do more we should do it, but I do not admit that conscription affords the means of accomplishing that end. I believe that not only is it not going to accomplish the end, but it is going to retard, hamper, and hinder it. Not only is this measure going to prove abortive, but it is going to prove very mischievous and very dangerous. I ask you, in all sincerity, in all earnestness, what chance is there of a law of this kind, being applied efficaciously unless it has the sanction of the people, unless they approve of it.

It is not necessary to imagine all sorts of things which have no ground except in certain wild imaginations. It is not necessary to imagine that there is going to be open rebellion, in order to show that this law is not going to be effective. There are many ways of resisting a law other than by open resistance. I do not for one moment think that it has entered the mind of anybody, however strongly he may feel against this law, to be a party to openly breaking it. But look at the time, the energy, the money that will be frittered away in endeavouring to enforce a law which everybody, from the Prime Minister down, admits is very unpopular; and would not receive the approval of the people if it were submitted to-morrow—a law which is brought in and sought to be enforced, when the opinion is universal that the law does not meet the approval of the people. Look at the time we are going to spend, to say nothing of the class, racial and other difficulties you are going to raise. Remember how long it took and the difficulties experienced in England before conscription could be resorted to and enforced. And in the United States it took three years to prepare public opinion before active participation in the war could be thought of. The failure of conscription in Australia has caused that country to revert to the voluntary system. The question is not whether conscription is logically sound, constitutionally or morally right or just, but whether it is opportune and practical and practicable.

It is a mistake to assume—and it is not true—that only the people of Quebec are opposed to conscription. I dare say that in this province of Ontario the farming community is probably as much opposed to conscription as the farming community of Quebec; I do not know; I can only conjecture. I offer my judgment only for what it is worth; but the honourable gentleman agrees with me, and the Prime Minister agrees with me, that if the law were submitted to-morrow it would not receive the approval of the people. Then why insist on a law of that kind? Why reject and put to one side a system which has produced the magnificent result of 425,000 soldiers in this country? Why discard a voluntary system by which Canada has done her duty well and promptly?

I do not agree with the statement that voluntary enlistment has broken down and is no good. Of course, it is not as fruitful just now as it might be, and we know why it is so: because the Government has stopped it; the Government has practically ordered enlistment to stop. Is it any wonder that it is not working satisfactorily now? But if you go to the people, even in the province of Quebec, and treat them properly, give them every opportunity of enlistment, give them the opportunity of being commanded by men of their own race, give them every opportunity of promotion and of recognition—which they have not now, and have never received during this war—and certain things which the province of Quebec expects from the majority in this country, and you will soon see that the voluntary system will not be the failure it is said to be. My honourable friend from Mille Isles (Hon. Mr. David) reminds me that the minister of the Crown who was appointed for the purpose of going to Quebec to organize voluntary enlistment, Colonel the Honourable Mr. Blondin, after spending a few weeks there, and after this Bill was introduced by the Premier, gave his verdict that, if the province of Quebec were properly treated and if her men were properly recognized there would be enlistment en masse. Is not that sufficient evidence for any one, coming, as it does, from a colleague of the Prime Minister? Should not that be conclusive for every one? But Colonel Blondin was stopped. There has been no recruiting going on, and yet figures have been submitted to this House and in another place for the purpose of showing that in the last few months enlistment has broken down. I do not believe that it really

has broken down notwithstanding the recent action of the government.

Instead of introducing conscription in the way in which he did, why did not the Prime Minister seek to devise a plan of co-operation with the leader of the Opposition? He had and has every reason to believe that the leader of the Opposition was and is prepared to assist him. Would he have approached him at all if he did not so believe? From the very day that war was declared until the present day, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal leaders have pronounced themselves squarely in favour of Canada's participation in the war. I defy honourable gentlemen in this House or anyone else to mention the name of a prominent Liberal, either in Quebec or anywhere else, who has not declared that Canada should take the largest possible part in this war. I do not know of one, and I would be very much surprised to hear the name of a single Liberal who spoke to the contrary. Was that not sufficient reason for the Prime Minister to go to Sir Wilfrid Laurier and ask him to assist him? Why did he not ask his co-operation? Why did he not offer him a share, not in the glory, but in the satisfaction of having accomplished his duty, while giving him a share in the responsibilities? Is there any one in this House who can doubt for one moment that, if that had been put to Sir Wilfrid, he would have expressed his desire and intention to go on and do everything he could possibly do to help the Government in completing our share in this war.

There was no necessity for offering Sir Wilfrid or his friends positions in the Cabinet. There was and is no necessity for a union or coalition Governement. Sir Wilfrid Laurier did not and does not need office in order to do his duty. He did not hold office in the early days of the war or since; he has not done anything officially in connection with the war; and yet he has done everything within his power to help in the war; and I think it would be an insult to him to assume that he was prepared to continue to take an active share in the war only if he were offered a position in the Government. I repeat that if the Governement had sought the co-operation and assistance of others outside of its own immediate supporters the necessity of even selective conscription would not have arisen.

The failure of the Government to avert the national crisis which is now threatening the very existence of Confederation is largely owing to the fact that the Government have been egotistically anxious to monopolize the conduct of the war, and to exclude therefrom the leaders of one-half of the Canadian people. I suppose that is in keeping with the Tory conception, which in some respects is not altogether unlike the Kaiser's conception of authority—that they alone are capable of governing. that they alone have the gift of government, that they are somewhat like the Kaiser himself annointed by the Almighty for the purpose of governing the people. If it is not that, what is the reason Liberals were not asked to take a part in the conduct and administration of this war? Is it that, or is it the other reason, of gaining for the Conserative party all the kudos and all the profit and all the glory that is to be got out of the conduct of the war? Let the Prime Minister abandon his Bill, and go to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, without the offer of a coalition or anything of that kind, and let him seek the assistance and counsels and co-operation of the Liberals; let him put a stop to this villification of the French Canadians, this constant vituperation and slander of two-thirds of the population of Canada, and put Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his friends in the position of going to the people of the province of Quebec and saying, "Your wrongs will be righted," and I am sure that enlistment will become just as fruitful in that province as anywhere else in the country. The results accomplished will be very much better than those produced by means of conscription, which nobody wants except this Government. What will be accomplished by passing this Bill? You will simply aggravate the class and racial difficulties which we have and which are very alarming. If what I suggest is carried out, you will preserve that modicum of national unity without which this country is headed for the breakers and will very soon be wrecked.

One is driven to conjecture why this measure is so insistently pressed in the face of the growing opposition to it and of the grave consequences involved necessarily in putting it into operation. Is it because of the fact that the Government thinks it necessary for its own fate, which is soon to be decided by the electors? It may be a mistake to think that. I do not know; I am simply asking the question; but that is a conjecture which is forced upon one's mind, and which one cannot escape.

I would advocate that, if necessary, the compensation to the soldiers be increased. I cannot quite understand why a man who is asked to go into the trenches in

France and Flanders to fight for you and for me should be paid less than the man who is engaged by you or by me to gather hay and put it in the barn. I do not see why the soldier should not get just as much— certainly not less. I believe considerably more than—than the common labourer in the country. If you want to make voluntary enlistment in this country even a greater success than it has been, why not increase the soldier's pay? Why not make the wealthy men of Canada pay the difference between what the soldier now receives and that which he ought to get? The men of wealth in this country have done very little so far. Why not make the profiteers disgorge some of the scandalous profits that they have made and apply them on the compensation to be paid to the soldiers and to their wives and children and the soldiers who have come home maimed? Honourable gentlemen are mistaken if they think that throughout the length and breadth of this country there has not been a shock such as has rarely been experienced in Canada over the disclosures which have recently been made. Is there any one in Canada who has not been scandalized beyond measure to war that one firm alone made a profit of $5,000,000 on bacon supplied by it for the British army in one year?

Organize recruiting intelligently and systematically, without favoritism and with equal chance for promotion and recognition, and you will, I feel confident, obtain better results than with this Bill.

There is one thing that I want to emphasize to-night, and I say it after full and mature consideration, and with all the deliberation of which I am capable. Over and above, beyond and paramount to, the question of conscription or voluntary enlistment is the question of national unity in this country. To my mind the establishment and permanence of national unity is far more important than the getting for the war of a few thousand men either by conscription or voluntary enlistment, in addition to those we have already raised. This war will come to an end some day, we all hope very soon, and we all believe—in fact we know—that it will end in the triumph of justice and freedom. When this war is over Canada will stand more than ever in need of that which she has hardly ever had—national unity. I am one of those who think that the efforts of the Fathers of Confederation towards creating a Canadian national sentiment have had but very little success so far, and within the last few years what there was of national unity in Canada, I regret to say, has just about been swept away. There is a chasm to-day between the two races in Canada, the depth and width of which few men realize. Warning has been given and often by many repeated but not heeded and we have a condition arising out of that situation for which the province of Quebec is blamed and unjustly blamed.

There has been a confusion of cause and effect in that connection. I desire to say without fear of contradiction, that all the opposition to this measure there is in Quebec to-day—and it is pretty general, I admit —is not so much opposition to conscription per se, as it is a manifestation of the deep, longstanding and recently much aggravated resentment on the part of the French Canadian people at the insults and attacks so constantly directed against them and especially the attacks on their mother tongue.

Conscription has merely provided the occasion or opportunity for voicing this same deep sense of irritation which was bound to explode soon or late in the province of Quebec. This bill is merely the occasion, the opportunity for giving vent to the resentment which has existed for years past and which has been growing daily in that province. The manifestation against conscription is in reality a manifestation against the vilification of the province of Quebec. It is a protest against the persecution of the language of the French Canadians, who constitute two-thirds of the population of this country, the descendants of the heroic founders and colonizers of Canada. I say that if this question had been settled, as it should have been settled years ago, if this Government had taken the responsibility which it should have taken, you would have heard very little opposition to conscription in the province of Quebec.

An Hon. SENATOR: Not at all.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: I would ask the honourable gentleman to go to Quebec and inform himself as to that. The trouble with my honourable friends from Ontario is that there is not much use in speaking to them about these things. There is no use in uttering the warnings which I have been uttering for years in this House and in other places. They are not heeded, they are not listened to. I invite my honourable friend to go to Quebec, where he will soon discover that the opposition is due very largely to the animosities and the irritation caused by the persistent persecution to which the French language has been subjected.

Is it not remarkable, and is it not regrettable, that, while we have discussed in this House transportation, shipping, trade after the war, employment of capital and labour, returned soldiers, and many other questions affecting after-war policy, the very question which is most important, which is most vital to the existence and permanence of the Canadian Confederation, has been shunned by everybody? We have discussed matters of dollars and cents; but when it comes to discussing the Canadian soul and making an examination of the national conscience, nobody does anything, nobody dares say anything or if he does he runs the chance of being called an agitator and a demagogue. Are we going to continue to live in this fool's paradise? Are we going to do the ostrich trick every day, in the hope that the storm will blow over unnoticed or unfelt? Are we going to allow the two races to get farther apart every day until the situation gets absolutely beyond solution? Do you want conditions similar to those which have prevailed in Ireland for three or four centuries to prevail in Canada? I know what I am talking about, and nobody knows better than I do that we are not at this very moment far removed from those very conditions. Yet nobody thinks about it, no one dares speak about it, and if one does, and it does not matter how judiciously, he is called a demagogue and agitator.

To-morrow I shall be attacked in the Toronto papers for having dared to discuss this question on the consideration of this Bill; but I owe it to my people, I owe it to my English-speaking friends, and to Canada and its future peace and unity to speak on this subject. This is a time for clear thinking, it is time for plain speaking, and, so far as I can command the English language, I intend to speak my mind plainly. My intention is not to find fault or to reproach any one, but simply to accomplish my duty as a loyal Canadian and a lover of British institutions, as one who has spent practically all his life in this province doing his best to support British political ideals and institutions.

May I again make a personal reference? For more than 30 years I have associated with English-speaking friends; I have taken a large part in all that interests them in their social life, their clubs, their sports in every way that I could. I have helped to the best of my ability their philanthropic, charitable and scientific institutions, and in every place where I thought I could be of assistance. I have subscribed my money towards these objects, to as great an extent as my means allowed; and, if there is a man who has a right to speak on this subject, if there is a man who has a right to stand up and say that so far as he knows he has never uttered a harsh or cruel word against his English friends, it is I. I have tried to understand the point of view of the English speaking Canadian and I have openly sympathized with it, whenever I could do so and when I could not I have remained silent: I hope I shall not be considered fatuous in saying that I think that I am as near an approach as exists in Canada to that type of Canadian which the fathers of Confederation hoped for.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: Will my honourable friend permit a question?

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Certainly.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: Will the honourable gentleman state what complaints he has against the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: I will name some of them, I could not name them all. One of them is the pernicious and abominable practice so long in vogue in Canada of promoting party welfare by appeals to prejudice and passion, another is the attempt to proscribe the French language.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: By whom?

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: By the Conservative party in Ontario. My honourable friend knows as well as I do that for thirty years there has not been one provincial or federal election in the province of Ontario that has not been fought by the Conservative party by means of appeals more or less disguised to prejudice and passion. I have in my possession pamphlets, dating as far back as 1886 or 1887, in which the Catholic clergy of Ontario and the French Canadian population are depicted in the most insulting way. "No popery! no French!" that was the cry in the first election in which I took part in this province, and the same thing has been going on more or less ever since. It is not even necessary that there should be an election for these outbursts as all of us know that on the 12th of July every year, here in Ottawa and in the surrounding country, and in the province generally, the same theme of discussion at every meeting is: "No popery! No French!" My honourable friend knows it as well as I do. He knows of the agitation for the abolition of the separate schools; he knows of the P. P.

Association; he knows of the attitude of Mr. Craig and of Dalton McCarthy and others in the past and in the present towards the language of my people. He knows that it is a permanent establishment of the Conservative party in Ontario to get power by means of appeals of that kind to the people.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: It is rather more than an Ontario man can stand to hear this agitation going on in Parliament every day. I want to say—

Some Hon. SENATORS: Order, order.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: If my honourable friend is going to make a speech I will sit down.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: I will give an instance of it if my honourable friend wants it.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Order.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Never more impudently, never more flagrantly and more wrecklesly has that been done than during the last few years. It is going on every day all through the press of this province; and yet my honourable friend is surprised; he does not know about this; he has never heard of such a thing. He never reads the Orange Sentinel; he never reads the Toronto News, which for months and years has published this national programme. What is the first item? "One language for Canada." I suppose my honourable friend never reads the papers which I have mentioned, or the Toronto Telegram, the Kingston Standard, or the Hamilton papers, and many others. I could keep him in reading for months by supplying him with extracts from these papers along the lines which I have mentioned.

Hon. Mr. BLAIN: It cannot have any other purpose than agitation.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: I do not know what my honourable friend means by agitation. If he means what I have described, if he means raising and promoting passion and prejudice, then I agree with him. We are accustomed to it. We have never seen anything else in Ontario. We had it before Confederation; we have it to-day worse than ever. We hear it on the street. I was a member of the House of Commons for twelve years, and time and time again it has been said to me—not by men living in the back streets, but by prominent citizens, merchants on Sparks street—"Vote for you? Not much; I would not vote for a Frenchman." Do you suppose that a highly-strung, proud race like mine is going to stand these things forever? Do you think they are not going to show their resentment? A Frenchman may suffer, he may do things that he will regret, and you may do things that you will regret; but he will probably suffer more than you. Is it not time to stop that kind of thing and deal with the French Canadians as equals and not as pariahs?

Hon. Mr. SPROULE: May I ask my honourable friend a question? Did I understand the honourable gentleman to say that not an election has taken place within the last forty years—

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Thirty years.

Hon. Mr. SPROULE: I have taken part in every local and federal election for the last thirty-eight years, and during that time I have never from any platform heard this question discussed.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: During the next ten days I will give my honourable friend the pamphlets.

Hon. Mr. SPROULE: I understood him to say that it was discussion.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Order.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Does my honourable friend want to make another speech? If so, I object.

Hon. Mr. SPROULE: I do not want to make a speech.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Now, with regard to this Bill itself, is it any wonder that it has met with opposition? Is it any wonder that the province of Quebec is not disposed to accept it, in view of the language in which it was introduced in the other House and the language in which my honourable friend (Hon. Sir James Lougheed) introduced it here and the language resorted by the Press towards Quebec? I regret to have to say what I am about to say, because there is no man who has a higher esteem and respect for the honourable leader of the Government in this House than I have. Ever since I have been a member of this House, I have, I think, always shown him the greatest respect and deference. I confess, honourable gentlemen, that I have not yet recovered from the surprise with which I listened to his words in introducing this Bill. May I be permitted to quote his words? I am doing this, not in anger, not for the purpose of being offensive or disagreeable, not for the purpose even of making a reproach, but simply for the purpose of

accounting for a condition of affairs existing in one part of this country at the present time and some of the difficulties with which this Bill is meeting. In introducing the Bill my honourable friend said among other things:

> To talk of a referendum at such a time does violence to every instinct of defence. To say that the Government should ask every craven to his country, every pacifist, every slacker, every recreant to public defence, every coward who fears to face the enemy, every Socialist who preaches disloyalty, every alien who asks the protection of our country at the expense of the lives of the men who fight for it to say that the Government shall ask a verdict from the thousands who proclaim their disloyalty from the house-tops, would constitute a farce out of the greatest tragedy that the world has ever seen enacted.

The other statement, which caused me equal surprise and pain, is this:

> Think of a race of people growing up oblivious to the grandeur of love of country, of patriotism, and of the self-denial and sacrifice by which men are prepared to place their lives on the altar of their country. When we think of men indifferent at such a time to all the best interests of civilization involved in this struggle, indifferent whether the enemy should crush out the freedom and liberty which they have enjoyed under their country's protection, it shakes our confidence in human nature.

Well, honourable gentlemen, who are the people who are asking for this referendum? Largely the people of the province of Quebec. Which race did my honourable friend refer to as the race of slackers, poltroons, cowards, disloyal men? Did my honourable friend, before penning these words, reflect that it was men of that race who fought and bled and died at Courcelette? I want to mention to my honourable friend that at Courcelette, out of 21 officers of the 22nd Regiment who took part, 16 died on the battlefield or afterwards from the wounds they received in that battle. Did it not occur to my honourable friend when uttering those words that the race which he is now describing in this opprobrious way is the race to which those men belonged? What will the mothers and fathers of those boys think when they read, if they do read, the remarks of my honourable friend? What will the whole race think of the appreciation which my honourable friend entertains and expresses so plainly in face of the sacrifices made by these men and many others of their race? Does my honourable friend think his language is going to help the task of those who, like myself, have been frankly, clearly and openly from the outset for participation in the war? Does he think it will help honourable gentlemen who sit on his side of the House, like his neighbour the honourable gentleman from Montarville (Hon. M. Beaubien) as well as those who may vote for this amendment? Does he think it is going to help them to convince the people of the province of Quebec that they should accept this measure, and continue to contribute in this war? Is that the kind of argument with which you convince or convert people? It has been repeatedly said in this House during the debate that this was a punitive measure. I do not want to say it is; I don't believe that it is; but if there were anything to make me believe it, it is the words of the Prime Minister in the other House and the words of my honourable friend here. If it is not a punitive measure, why use such words with regard to the province of Quebec? I am not arguing that it is; but those who are going to argue that it is will have no stronger argument than these very words of my honourable friend and the Premier. I know my honourable friend too well, I know his goodness of heart and his calm, judicious and fair mind too well to have the slightest doubt that when he reflects upon the construction which is bound to be put upon his words, and the use that will be made of them, he will regret having used them. Unfortunately, like many other things which are said, while they are sometimes forgotten, they are often not forgiven. The mischief is done. How suggestive are these words of such high-minded and thoughtful, and usually calm and considerate men as the Premier and my honourable friend, of the troubled mind and soul of Canada, and how suggestive of the necessity for immediate and thoughtful consideration and action!

In this way, and in many other ways, yesterday, last month, last year, and in previous years, you have estranged the people of the province of Quebec. You have made them feel that so long as they remain in their own province, where they are in the majority, they may do as they like, with regard to their education and the use of their language, but immediately they cross the Ottawa river, for instance, they cannot continue to speak, or to have taught to their children, the French language; they may do so on the north side of the river, but if they cross over to the south side they run the risk of having to pay a fine of $500 or go to jail. These are the things hon-

ourable gentlemen which are reaching the people in Quebec and have been reaching them from Ontario for many years past and especially during recent years and the effects of which are manifesting themselves to-day; these are the things which I say in all earnestness must be remedied if we are to create a united and prosperous Canada.

Am I wrong in this? May I trespass further on the time of this honourable House to give the proof, not in my own words, not in the words of a French-Canadian, but in the words of an Englishman, British-born, who knows the French-Canadian people, who has followed this question, and has written a letter which I find in the Montreal Daily Herald of July 3 of this year. It is signed by Mr. E. Harper Wade. Mr. Wade is a man of substance and of intelligence, a graduate of one of the English universities, who has lived in Canada for a number of years. This is what he says:

To the Editor of the Herald:

Sir,—My repeated assertion, accompanied by confirmatory evidence, that it is the Ontario bilingual trouble that has prevented the French Canadians of Quebec from sending as many volunteers as other provinces, is now receiving confirmation from many sources, notably from Lieut.-Col. Arthurs in the House on Thursday. It is neither a question of passion nor reason, but of sentiment, which in every human being outweighs either, and has done so since man was first man. Probably the strongest sentiment of the French Canadian race is in connection with their language. If you persistently try to deprive a man of what he holds dearest, then appeal to him to assist you against a common enemy, on the insultingly low ground that it is better for him to join you before being himself attacked, and when his response seems to you inadequate, call him a slacker and a coward—

The very words used by my honourable friend.

—and finally tell him you will make him fight whether he likes it or not, you must be sanguine indeed to expect good results.

Why, these are the very words which I have been using. My honourable friend from Peel (Hon. Mr. Blain) may cogitate over these words:

Yet this is precisely what Ontario has done. All friends of the English-speaking people, of which I am certainly and with good reason one, must keenly regret the fact that the Government of that province has seen fit to put the restriction of the French language in the separate Roman Catholic schools of Ontario before the national issue of encouraging, or at least not impeding, French Canadian recruiting. To rightly apply the words of "Justice to all":—The lives of the wives and children of the men fighting to give protection against an infernal foe one not of so great consequences in the eyes of the Ontario Government as having the French language restricted, hampered and if possible repressed in Ontario as Erse was in Ireland, but as neither Welsh nor Gaelic have been in Great Britain, for England learns by experience, and found Irish results discouraging.

General Smuts in a speech that rang through Europe and reached throughout the entire civilized world, said in effect, "Even those nations that have fought against you must feel that their language is as safe and secure under the British flag as that of the children of your own household and your own blood."

The New Witness, published in London, England, and edited by the well-known writer, G. K. Chesterton, says, under date of May 24: "In Ontario it is now a crime to teach French to little French Canadian boys and girls in French Canadian schools. The penalty is a fine of $500, or six months' imprisonment." If it were possible to contradict this, in the interest of Canada I would gladly do so. But can I truthfully? I am assured one school teacher was fined $500 for some infringement of the school laws, and only saved from six months' imprisonment by the fine being paid by others.

Why not be British? The United Kingdom regards the languages of all peoples that come into the Empire as a sacred trust. If it had not been so, and if England had treated the Boers as Ontario treated her quarter of a million French Canadians, there would have been no British South Africa to-day, yet it was what some Big-Englanders wanted to do.

If in South Africa the Dutch language were treated as the French language is treated in this country, how long, I ask you, would there be peace and unity in South Africa? How long would the South African union exist if an attempt were made to proscribe the Dutch language there?

Why Americanize our institutions? This idea of a common language comes from the States, not from England. It is a good one to apply to European continental immigrants, but we Canadians must never forget that while Great Britain has always been ready to protect us to the utmost of her power, it was French Canadians that saved Canada for England at the time of the War of Independence, and that Quebec would never have come into Confederation if such action as Ontario and Manitoba have been guilty of had been anticipated or thought possible.

Bourassa and Lavergne could have no following—

I would ask my honourable friends to weigh these words, coming from an Englishman, British-born, a man who knows the province of Quebec and knows French-Canadians.

Bourassa and Lavergne could have no following if there had been no school language question.

May I say this, further, with regard to the French-Canadian. He thinks that the size of his churches, his reverence for his priest, his so-called backwardness, his alleged ignorance of the art of money-making—and we were reminded of this repeatedly this after-

noon—his habits of life so long as he is law-abiding—and he is law-abiding —are matters which concern himself alone and which ought to be sacred from sneers and insults. He is bound to resent such statements for instance, as were made not long ago in Parliament, that his priests are merely parasites and should be deported; that it is dangerous to allow the Arsenal to remain at Quebec, because the loyalty of the French Canadians cannot be trusted. He resents the calumnies and lies invented and circulated constantly and systematically through the press, in speeches and in private conversations, concerning him, his race and his creed. I want to be perfectly frank. The French Canadian is not willing to subscribe, and will never subscribe, to the doctrine that he must renounce his language; he is not prepared to adopt the first article of the political faith which is so strenuously advocated in Ontario and elsewhere, that there must be but one language for all Canada and all Canadians. He is not prepared, either, complacently to accept the statement that there are a superior race and an inferior race; that he is a sort of pariah and is to be treated somewhat after the fashion of the Indian and kept confined on the reserve where he constitutes the majority—in the province of Quebec; that if he chooses to settle anywhere else in Canada, which his forefathers discovered and colonized, he must give up his mentality, his language, his traditions—things which he holds dearer than life itself. He resents being placed on the same footing as the refuse of Sicily, Austria, and continental Europe—strongly resents that these immigrants should be preferred to him anywhere outside of Quebec. He is not willing to be denationalized. He is unwilling to renounce his origin and his speech and what they stand for, especially at this very time. While he freely recognizes and admires the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon, he knows he is possessed of virtues which are proper to himself and no less valuable and admirable. He thinks he is just as good, as law-abiding, as intelligent, as well-educated as well behaved, as patriotic, and as loyal as his Anglo-Saxon neighbour—though he is not quite so boastful about it. At all times and in all places he is willing to recognize that the Anglo-Saxon is a much better money-getter than himself; but he insists upon keeping his notion that the correct proportion of money in this life's happiness and purposes is more in accordance with his measure than with that of most of his English speaking fellow-citizens. He is proud of being a British subject, but prouder still of being a Canadian; and if ever he has to choose between the two he will not hesitate. He is proud of the French blood in his veins, but he would not for one moment think of exchanging British citizenship to become a citizen of the French Republic. He loves and admires France. but he loves and admires still more the language which France gave him, and with which France has so constantly disseminated throughout the world enlightenment, progress, science, art, and honour, and in which France has ever eloquently and consistently upheld the cause of human progress and human liberty. His love of French speech is not so much because—or not even because—it is the language of France as because of the incomparable things which French thought and French speech have accomplished throughout the whole world. The attempt to banish his language from any part of this country, discovered and colonized by his ancestors, to punish with large fines or imprisonment the teaching of school matters or even of religious subjects in French to his children, is, he thinks, not much better than many things which the now world-hated German has been doing in this cruel war.

The French Canadian has had ample time and opportunity to appraise the methods, thoughts, and habits of life of his English-speaking brother and to compare them with his own, and he still prefers his own. He may be, and no doubt is, obtuse and blind: yet he is not willing to be disturbed in his blissful ignorance. He persists in believing that his frugality, his thrift, his respect for law and order, his contentment with a modicum of the world's riches and honours, his easy, happy ways of life, his numerous children, and finally his preference for Canadian to any other soil, are quite consistent with his loyalty to our common flag, his duty to his fellow-citizens of another speech or of another faith. And he is content to rely on these virtues in the struggle for life, either as an individual or for the community of which he is a unit. If these habits and virtues do not count sufficiently in the struggle for the survival of the fittest, he accepts in advance the result with stoicism; but he shrewdly believes that they will count in the ultimate result. If he is treated fairly, as an equal, as a co-partner, not merely tolerated as an inferior, he will be second to none in his love of and devotion to Canada, in his loyalty and willing sacrifice to British institutions and Canadian needs. You cannot make an Anglo-Saxon of a French Canadian, and if you

could the product would be worthless. The fruitless and irritating attempt to denationalize him should be given up forever.

The time has come when this situation must be faced frankly and squarely. To allow it to drag along will only make matters worse. It is more fitting to think about it and more necessary to endeavour to settle it now than it is to deal with those after-war measures to which I have referred.

French Canadians are sometimes charged with provincialism, with Chauvinism. It is charged that their vision does not extend much beyond the limits of their province. When they are told that they may not elsewhere speak their language or exercise the rights and privileges which they exercise when they live in the province of Quebec, is it any wonder, that they are attracted to the soil of their own province more than to the rest of Canada? Treat them with equal liberality and their provincialism will disappear at once.

Why not frankly recognize that both races have qualities and have defects? Why not admire and endeavour to imitate our respective virtues, and be tolerant with regard to our respective faults or defects? Would you have a better understanding and a more thorough conception of the irritation which is to be found all over French Canada if I mentioned to you the fact that to-day in the province of Ontario the world-hated German enjoys privileges which are denied the French-Canadian people in this province?

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: It is so, and I will prove it to you. I expected my honourable friend to say no, and I have the proof right here. I know my honourable friend would be shocked at hearing such a thing; who would not be? But this is a fact. One of the regulations which govern education in this province is Regulation 15.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL: We have heard that often.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Well, you have forgotten it.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL: No, I have not. The honourable gentleman makes a total misrepresentation of the facts in connection with it.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Misrepresentation? I give that as a fact, and I am going to prove it to my honourable friend, and I invite him to listen to me; this is an important matter. Regulation 15, one of the regulations governing education in this province is as follows:

> In school sections where the French or German language prevails, the trustees may, in addition to the Course of Study prescribed for public schools, require instruction to be given in reading, grammar and composition to such pupils as are directed by their parents or guardians to study either of these languages, and in all such cases the authorized text books in French or German shall be used.

This regulation 15 has been in force and acted on ever since and even before Confederation, up to the time when Regulation 17 was enacted in 1912.

Regulation 17 has repealed that provision in regard to French, and left intact the provision in regard to German, and I defy my honourable friend to prove the contrary.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL: No.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: It is all very well for my honourable friend to say no, but I defy him to prove the contrary. I know what I am talking about. The people of the province of Quebec know that, and are you surprised at their irritation, at their deep resentment, when they know that the Germans in this province of Ontario get and enjoy rights and privileges which are denied to them? I wish to emphasize the fact that they have to pay a fine of $500 or go to jail if regulation 17 is violated. That is the position. We have stood that for five years in this province. Nobody listens to us except it is my honourable and venerable friend, who says that we are liars. Nobody will listen to us; the whole answer to our statements and arguments is invariably "No." There is no use in talking to people of this kind, for they think that we are not capable of telling the truth.

I regret that I have taken so much time. I did not intend to do it; but, as I have gone into this subject most thoroughly and carefully, and as I know what I am talking about, and as I am making those statements deliberately, knowing that I stand absolutely on uncontracdictable ground, I think it is better that we should have this question out, and see if some impression can be made. My sole purpose and object is to try to waken the people of this province to the reality of the conditions which exist. I do not want any more laughing things away in this fashion; the time is past for that. You of the English-speaking provinces have got to deal with this question, honourable gentlemen, and the sooner the better. I am uttering a solemn warning and a solemn

appeal, not a threat. I do not doubt that you are just as anxious in your desire to have a united Canada as I am. I know that we stand on common ground. I know that we are all loyal and patriotic to Canada, and it is because I know that the division between the races is deeper and wider than it ever has been that I appeal to you, the majority of this country, to see that this matter is righted. To my mind it is far more important, far more vital, far more urgent, than those after-the-war questions of trade, shipping, industries, transportation, employment of capital and labour, etc. What is the good of better shipping or transportation facilities and so on, if you are going to have constant and permanent bitter estrangement between the races and a war of races in this country—if you are going to have this festering sore constantly opened? What is the good of anything else? Is it not possible to get in this country some English-speaking people who are willing to go into this question, to study it, and not meet our assertions with mere denials? Is it not possible that an appeal in this House or elsewhere will induce some of them to go into this question and see whether we are telling the truth or not? When this question was up before, I abstained from speaking on it, but matters have come to such a pass that it would be criminal for any one who knows what I know not to express his mind clearly and frankly about it and not to utter a solemn warning.

With reference to the Bill, I am going to vote for the amendment, not because I am not in this war to the end, not because I believe Canada has done everything it can do, for Canada may do more yet; but because I think the method of continuing Canada's contribution to the war is not that proposed by the Governement. If the people of Canada had approved of it, or if they approve of it when it is submitted to them, then I will do my level best, as I have done in the past, to get my French-Canadian friends to submit to the law and obey it and let it be put in force. I think the law is ill-conceived, ill-timed. I have not gone into a discussion on conscription, which would be purely academic. I do not know of any logical or constitutional ground against conscription, but I say that conscription at this hour and in this way and because what has already been done and said in this House and elsewhere on public platforms and in the Press is not the best means at our disposal. If I may repeat it without any offense to my honourable friend, for whom, as he knows, I have the greatest respect, his manner of introducing this Bill and the words that we have heard in this House, and which have come to us from elsewhere are not going to make it very much more acceptable to Quebec than it is in itself. On the contrary, I think the things that have been said are going to make it impracticable, even if the situation were not as I have described it. These things make it impossible for my honourable friends from Stadacona, Montarville and De Salabery and others to go down to Quebec and ask the people to accept this Bill. How can we go and ask them to approve and accept the bill when we have such evidence as I have described directed against them? The only patriotic thing, the only truly loyal thing, the only efficacious thing to do would be for Sir Robert Borden to approach the leader of the Opposition with a view to making enlistment what it ought to be, and what it can be if it is dealt with in the proper fashion.

Let us stop at once and forever, this constant daily misrepresentation, this vilification of a whole race, two-thirds of the population of Canada, the descendants of the heroic founders and colonizers of Canada, the cousins of the heroes of the Marne and Verdun; the heroic participants in the valorous and heroic deels of Courcelette, let us stop the cruel and senseless persecution to which they are subjected in the education of their children. Stop that useless and cruel attempt to proscribe their beautiful and immortal French speech. Remember that after this war and for all time French and English must live here side by side, and together work out a common destiny, for better or for worse. Let us remember that it is by no blind hazard nor fortuitous circumstances that the descendants of the two greatest and proudest races have been thrown together in this part of the New World, to live together and prosper, not to ostracise one another. Let us remember that it is in our combined power to establish and perpetuate, on this northern half of the North American Continent, probably the most perfect, as human things can be perfect—the most perfect christian democratic Commonwealth. Let us remember that we can make or forever mar such a glorious future. And inevitably we shall mar it and irrevocably, if we do not at once put an end to our religious and racial strifes. Let us fully realise that in this Canada of ours, God's country, we, you of British origin and

we of French birth, are offered the very best, probably the last, chance of making a success, and a brilliant one if we only will try, of democratic ideals and purposes; and that if we fail it will be only because we will have allowed our vision to be obscured by old time feuds which have no place and should have no refuge in this free land, by wretched and miserable intolerance, by an insane and puerile wish to make each and every one of us eat, sleep, live and die, dress, walk, talk, and act, with deadly uniformity. If we fail, it will be because we shall be so blind as to not see that each race has qualities, virtues and aptitudes peculiar to itself and that if you destroy them you are destroying as many elements of progress and happiness. If we fail it will be because we shall fail to realize that it is union, not fusion, of the races which alone is possible and necessary in Canada. Let us, for the sake of preserving and utilizing our respective virtues and qualities, be tolerant of our respective faults or shortcomings.

This measure will probably become law. It may be enforced soon or late, or never, as I hope. The war itself, the great calamity which has overcome the world, will come to an end sometime. Things will right themselves with more or less celerity and completeness. But we in Canada, English and French, will be here forever; and that is to my mind the most important, the most vital thing to always remember and never to lose sight of. Shall we forever continue or shall we now put an end to fratricidal strife?